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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 001485

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MISSING TEXT)

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KIRF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)  
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS CASE OF DOAN VAN DIEN AND DOAN HUY CHUONG

REF: HCMC 1361 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Consul General Seth Winnick for reasons 1.5  
b/d.

11. (C) Summary. Following up on reftel reports of a series of dissident arrests prior to the APEC Leaders' Summit, ConGen was able to confirm the detention of Doan Van Dien and Doan Huy Chuong -- father and son -- in HCMC. They appear to have been targeted for their peaceful political and social activism. Based on a private conversation with Dien's wife, the two detainees are affiliated with the People's Democratic Party of Vietnam, of which AMCIT Thanh Cong Do is a signature member. Dien also is a Protestant preacher is affiliated with controversial Mennonite Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang. Quang reportedly introduced father and son to Do and the PDP-VN. Despite the arrests of Dien and Chuong, thus far, local officials have not yet taken any action to restrict the operations of the five Mennonite house churches that Dien operated. End Summary.

12. (C) On December 20, PolOff traveled to Dong Nai province to look into the cases of Doan Van Dien and Doan Huy Chuong, father and son activists that were reported arrested just prior to the APEC Leaders' Summit in November. (Per reftel, pro-democracy websites affiliated with the overseas Vietnamese community reported that Dien and Chuong, along with other activists, were arrested for attempting to form a "Farmers' and Workers' Union."

13. (C) In rural Phu Ngoc village some three hours from HCMC, we met in private with Ho Thi Thuong, wife of Dien and mother of Chuong. Her home also doubled as a local Mennonite house church. Thuong confirmed that her husband was detained in Dong Nai on November 14 based on an arrest warrant issued by HCMC police. HCMC police also raided the guesthouse in HCMC which her husband was renting and confiscated a computer. She also noted that her husband was "dropping leaflets" (NFI) in HCMC prior to his arrest. Based on two documents recovered from the computer and police surveillance, Thuong was informed by Dong Nai authorities that her husband was charged with "propagandizing against the government."

14. (C) Thuong was able to visit her husband twice in detention in the Dong Nai. He complained of stomach pain and appeared thin, but did not mention any harassment or abuse, nor did he appear physically mistreated, his wife told us. Prison officials asked Thuong to provide roughly

USD 30 to buy stomach medicine for her husband. In December, Dien husband was transferred to the "B-34" complex in HCMC -- the detention center for the Ministry of Public Security's southern headquarters. She was able to deliver more money for medicine to the facility but not allowed to visit with her husband or son, who also was incarcerated there.

¶15. (C) Thuong said she knew much less about the status of her son. She was told by Dong Nai police and by sympathizers in the dissident community that he was arrested on November 16 in HCMC in the lodging quarters of the textile factory for which he worked. She has not had any contact with him and does not know exactly why he was arrested, although she confirmed that he was "following the work of my husband."

#### How They Became Activists

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¶16. (C) Thuong explained that her husband had long advocated for land rights in their rural community. Although self-taught, he was able to assist the dispossessed and the landless to file grievances against the government. In parallel with his land rights activism, Dien was drawn to and became a preacher for the Mennonite Church of the controversial pastor Nguyen Hong Quang. Thuong indicated that Quang introduced her husband to AMCIT political activist Thanh Cong Do and his group, the People's Democratic Party of Vietnam (PDP-VN). (Note: Do was detained in Vietnam in August and expelled in September for his political activities. At least six other Vietnamese citizens-members of the PDP-VN remain in police custody. End Note.)

¶17. (C) Thuong said that her husband decided to move to HCMC and become a full time grassroots activist for the PDP-VN. She said that, at her first meeting with her husband in detention, he gave her a phone number in the United States to call. She spoke with Do who promised to send her financial support through a trusted intermediary. She

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noted that Pastor Quang also would be involved in this transfer of funds.

#### No Impact on the House Church Thus Far

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¶18. (C) Despite her husband's arrest and confirmed involvement in the PDP-VN, local authorities thus far have not harassed the five house churches affiliated with her husband. These house churches serve 104 members in the local community, Thuong told us. She added that, following Quang's release from prison in September 2005 (he was amnestied after 16 months of a three-year sentence for an altercation with undercover police officers in HCMC), she had asked Quang for guidance on whether the house churches should register under Vietnam's legal framework on religion. She said that Quang instructed them not to register.

#### Unsubstantiated Allegations of Mistreatment

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¶19. (SBU) An overseas Vietnamese website affiliated with the PDP-VN alleged that Dien is very ill in prison. It also claimed that a "communication" it received noted that Dong Nai police had used "violence to interrogate and intimidate Chuong."

#### Comment

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¶10. (C) It appears that Dien and Chuong were detained for their non-violent political and social activism. This far,

we have seen no evidence or information to support the allegations that Chuong has been physically harmed, though we note that Pastor Quang has often made unfounded or exaggerated accounts of abuse.

¶11. (C) The role of Pastor Quang as an intermediary or facilitator in the dissident movement comes as no surprise. What is not clear, however, is whether all his followers know of and agree with his decision to co-mingle politics and religion, a volatile combination in Vietnam. If he is not transparent, and there are ample indications that he is not, then he is putting his followers at risk as the government will put anyone associated with Quang under increased scrutiny. We have pressed provincial authorities not to use the political views of individual pastors to restrict the religious rights and activities of their congregations or denominations. End comment.  
WINNICK